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ABSTRACT

Because a child witness' account is often the only source of information about an alleged incidence of sexual abuse, it becomes imperative to obtain an accurate account from the child so that justice may be achieved. This book provides information on children's linguistic ability in relation to videotaped interviews conducted since the introduction of the Memorandum of Good Practice in North Wales, guidelines on making videotapes of child interviews to obtain information for use in criminal proceedings. The book is based on 100 English transcripts of videotaped interviews with 3- to 12-year-olds. Most of the cases involved the victim of alleged sexual abuse with little corroborating evidence. Interviews were supported by survey information collected by police officers. The chapters of the book generally trace the approach to interviewing as outlined in the Memorandum: (1) "Talking and Listening to Children," including information on the Memorandum and children's language development; (2) "Establishing Rapport," including timing and location of interviews; (3) "Free Narrative Phase: Listening to Children," discussing how adequate narrative opportunities can be provided and how interviewers can support narrative in a nonleading way; (4) "Asking Questions," considering how children acquire an understanding of different types of "wh-" questions, and containing a checklist for interviewers; (5) "Interviewing Observed: Child Language and Development," focusing on children's ability to understand the words that are likely to be used in the investigative interview; and (6) "Interviewing Children with Special Needs," discussing challenges in interviewing children with disabilities, bilingual children, and minority language speakers. (Contains approximately 150 references.) (KB)

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